

**Remarks of Rep. Henry A. Waxman**  
**League of Conservation Voters Capital Dinner**  
**Lifetime Achievement Award**

June 25, 2014

Thank you, Leader Pelosi, for your kind and generous introduction. Your introduction means a lot to me, and I am grateful for your words ... your friendship ... and your incredible leadership.

I have been in Congress for 40 years, and I have never served under a better or more effective Speaker and Leader than Nancy Pelosi.

People said in 2009 that the House couldn't pass the Waxman-Markey climate bill. They would have been right, except they didn't count on the determination and drive of Nancy Pelosi.

They also predicted we couldn't enact health reform, financial reform, tobacco reform, food safety reform, and many other landmark laws. But under the leadership of Nancy Pelosi, President Obama, and Harry Reid, we did.

It's great President Obama was here tonight. He is going to be remembered as the President who turned the tide ... who faced down climate denial ... who said "no" to the entrenched special interests ... and who protected our precious planet for our children and grandchildren.

His words inspire me ... and I am sure they inspire you. I know he inspires millions across the nation, especially our young people.

I am deeply honored to accept this Lifetime Achievement award from the League of Conservation Voters.

LCV and many other groups here tonight have been my close allies for decades. In every close environmental vote, Gene Karpinski was always there outside the House chamber, working to the very end. And I thank him for that and for his tremendous leadership of the LCV.

You have heard about my accomplishments tonight, but I've been around long enough to know, they aren't my accomplishments. They are yours. You advised me on policy. You developed strategies for arousing the public and putting pressure on Congress. You wrote letters and held rallies. You walked the halls of Congress and delivered crucial votes. And you made countless other sacrifices.

One of the advantages of having served 40 years in Congress is that people ask you to reflect on your career and share lessons learned. So I want to share two of them.

The first is: don't get discouraged.

It's so easy today for people to be negative about politicians and government. They see a gridlocked Congress, unlimited spending on political attack ads, and halting movement on national priorities.

But we have to remember that it's never been easy to make progress.

It took a decade of work to pass the Clean Air Act of 1990. But it was worth it. When our moment came, we passed a law that was much stronger than any bill we had proposed in any prior Congress. We stopped acid rain, helped close the hole in the ozone layer, cut smog, and reduced toxic emissions ... all while growing the economy and creating new pollution control industries.

Over my career, I have had similar experiences on so many issues. From the day the tobacco executives testified that nicotine is not addictive, it took 15 years to pass the law giving FDA jurisdiction over tobacco products. It took my whole career to pass a law guaranteeing health coverage to all Americans.

We would be foolish to think the greatest environmental challenge of all – climate change – would be any different. We are going to succeed. But we're going to have to be determined and persistent.

We also need to be flexible and creative. If one path is blocked, we need to find another.

I am willing to try any approach when it comes to fighting climate change. In 2009, I partnered with my friend, Ed Markey, to pass a cap and trade bill through the House.

But when the Senate Republicans blocked action in 2010, I became an advocate of a carbon tax. When Washington was consumed with the possibility of a “grand bargain,” there were lots of people with ideas about what taxes to cut, but few with ideas for how to raise the needed revenue. A carbon tax could have been the answer, protecting the environment and strengthening our economy. Unfortunately, Republican obstructionism again blocked any grand bargain.

So now I have become a champion of progress through administrative action.

Republicans in Congress are trying hard to block the President, but they aren’t succeeding. We keep a database of the anti-environment votes cast on the House floor. Today is the one-year anniversary of the President’s Climate Action Plan. It is also the day that House Republicans cast their 500<sup>th</sup> anti-environment vote on the House floor.

It’s a stunning contrast. The Republican anti-environment agenda and science-denial isn’t going anywhere. But the President and our nation are moving forward.

I believe we are at a crossroads on climate. There are three critical decisions we need to get right over the next 12 months. First, we need to finalize and strengthen the clean power plant rule. This will be the first national effort to limit our largest source of carbon pollution.

Second, the Administration needs to make the right decision on Keystone.

And third is an issue that doesn't get the same amount of attention, but is absolutely critical. Nine months from now, the Administration will make a commitment for reducing U.S. emissions post-2020. We need a strong, science-based pledge ... we need effective diplomacy to persuade our key allies to match our ambition ... and we need a strategy for implementing our pledge using the full authority of the Clean Air Act and other laws.

If we can look back in a year and say we have done these things, we will have made a real breakthrough on climate.

I may be leaving Congress at the end of the year, but I am excited about the progress we can make. And I will continue to fight by your side.

I am grateful beyond words for the recognition you have given me ... and even more so for all the incredibly important work you have done – and will continue to do – to protect our environment for our families and future generations.

Thank you.